Nile Oil Project (GNOP) in Sudan from Talisman Energy Inc. Canada investing US$ 720 million (Rs. 3,456 crore approximately) on 12th March 2003, after due assessment of the risks and the mitigating factors.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) OVL has informed that they have taken standard political risk insurance policy covering confiscation, expropriation, nationalization and selective discrimination to the extent available.

New retail outlets of BPCL

976. DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to open new retail outlets of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL);

(b) if so, how many of them will be opened in Andhra Pradesh; and

(c) by when they will be opened?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) to (c) Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (BPCL) has proposal to set up retail outlet dealership in the country, including 12 outlets in the State of Andhra Pradesh, out of the Government approved marketing plans. In additional, regular surveys are carried out and locations found economically viable and having sufficient potential, are identified for setting up of retail outlets in all the States including Andhra Pradesh.

Cost and time overrun of Sakhlain-I project

977. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India in Sakhlain-I oil/gas project in USSR, is facing time and cost overruns even after having invested a whopping US$ 1.422 billion;

(b) if so, whether this is due to Moscow not clearing the feasibility report on flimsy pretexts;

(c) whether according to ONGC Videsh Ltd.'s estimation, the crude from Sakhlain-I is set to flow by 2005; and

(d) how far the present deadlock is going to prolong the delay in the completion of the project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) and (b) Revision of cost estimates in oil and gas projects is a normal industry practice as the projects progress from the initial exploration phase to the development phase. During this process, costs and schedule get refined, based on factors such as reserve estimates, technological aspects and financial & economic parameters.

ONGC-Videsh Limited (OVL) has informed that in the case of Sakhlain-I Project, the current estimated reserves for oil and gas are higher as compared to the reserves estimated at the time of approval of the project, thus necessitating higher costs which are not final as of today, and also that no feasibility report on Sakhlain-I Project is pending with the Russian Government.

(c) Production of oil from the Sakhlain-I Project is expected to commence by 2005 end.

(d) Does not arise in view of reply to (a) and (b) above.

VRS in IOC

978. DR. AKHILESH DAS: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have lately approved proposal of IOC to offer voluntary retirement to their surplus staff; and

(b) if so, the extent of surplus staff, category-wise and to what extent the staff has been removed by using the VRS?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The extent of identified surplus staff, all in the non-officer category, is about 1068, out of which between 700 and 1000 employees are expected to avail the Voluntary Retirement Scheme. The Scheme has been announced with effect from 4.7.2003 and Indian Oil Corporation has started receiving the applications.